

# Important differences between two recently published papers regarding parental alienation, Meier et al. (2019) and Harman and Lorandos (2020)

Did the authors....	Meier et al., (2019)	Harman & Lorandos (2020)
<p><i>Post their research design on the Open Science Framework so other scientists could see what was planned and if the study was executed as planned?</i></p> <p>Lack of transparency makes it impossible to know if the Meier team changed their research design as they collected and coded data, which would lead to biases.</p>	✗	✓
<p><i>Pre-register and embargo their hypotheses so they could not adjust their hypotheses to fit their data after the fact?</i></p> <p>The Meier team could have changed their hypotheses to match their findings after running their statistics, making their study just exploratory and not a true scientific test.</p>	✗	✓
<p><i>Define in a replicable way what was meant by "alienation cases"?</i></p> <p>If it is not clear what an "alienation" case was, we cannot know what cases were actually included in the Meier team's study and whether other scientists would have agreed with the definitions used by the investigators.</p>	✗	✓
<p><i>Detail the coding process and explain how discrepancies in coding were resolved?</i></p> <p>To prevent biases, the research design should have processes in place to ensure the coders do not know the hypotheses of the study and detail how disagreements in coding were resolved. The Meier team did not provide any details about this and so the objectivity of the coders is questionable.</p>	✗	✓
<p><i>Have all their cases and coding documentation available or provided on request?</i></p> <p>Without a list of the cases included in the study, it is impossible to know whether the Meier team actually included cases where parental alienation occurred or was alleged, and verify whether the way their coders applied their codes was not biased.</p>	✗	✓
<p><i>Clearly describe why all cases were included or excluded?</i></p> <p>Without knowing what cases were excluded and clearly knowing why, the Meier team may have cherry picked the cases they wanted to include in their study to support their hypotheses. We also then don't know if the Meier team's cases are comparable to all cases at the US appellate level.</p>	✗	✓
<p><i>Show the statistical models that were used to draw conclusions?</i></p> <p>We cannot know whether the Meier team's analyses were appropriate for use with their data without seeing the models, nor can we tell how many cases were included in each analysis or what the magnitude of their effects were.</p>	✗	✓
<p><i>Thoroughly describe what variables were included in all statistical models?</i></p> <p>When you add variables to a model, it changes the outcomes. Many unethical scholars add variables to models until they get the results they want. The Meier team provides no specific information about all the variables in their models.</p>	✗	✓
<p><i>Describe the statistical results accurately and not exaggerate the findings?</i></p> <p>The Meier team often reported odds ratios as probabilities, which exaggerates the findings.</p>	✗	✓

Adapted from Harman, J. and Lorandos, D. (2020) Allegations of Family Violence in Court: How Parental Alienation Affects Judicial Outcomes. Psychology, Public Policy and Law, 1 - 25. Published online December. 2020 - <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2020-96321-001.html> Table 1.

Meier, J. S., Dickson, S., O'Sullivan, C., Rosen, L., & Hayes, J. (2019). Child custody outcomes in cases involving parental alienation and abuse allegations (GWU Law School Public Law Research Paper No. 2019-56). SSRN. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3448062>.

